



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



VOSIKA APPOINTED TO VETERANS COMMISSION

Gov. Dennis Daugaard has appointed Lori Vosika of Hot Springs to the South Dakota Veterans Commission.

"Vosika's twenty-two years of service in military and social work will be a great asset to our Commission," said Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

After a 22-year career in the Air Force and Reserves, Vosika retired Dec. 31, 2013, as Lieutenant Colonel. Since 9/11, Vosika served five tours of active duty at Ellsworth AFB, Malstrom AFB and Manas Transit Center in Kyrgyzstan.

Vosika has worked at the VA Black Hills Health Care System since 1996 where she has worked in substance abuse, PTSD and acute medicine. She currently serves as the OEF/OIF/OND program manager.

Vosika replaces Commissioner Gene Murphy who has served on the Veterans Commission since 1990. Vosika's term expires October 2019.

"Gene has been an outstanding advocate for South Dakota's veterans and their families, and we appreciate his commitment and service to this state, this great county and to our veterans," said Zimmerman.

The Commission will be honoring Gene for his service to South Dakota's veterans later this year.



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Heroes Among Us—
showcasing 125 South Dakota
veterans.



NEW ONLINE GI BILL COMPARISON TOOL AVAILABLE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs launched an online [GI Bill® Comparison Tool](#) to make it easier for veterans, service-members, and dependents to calculate their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and learn more about VA's approved colleges, universities and other education and training programs across the country.

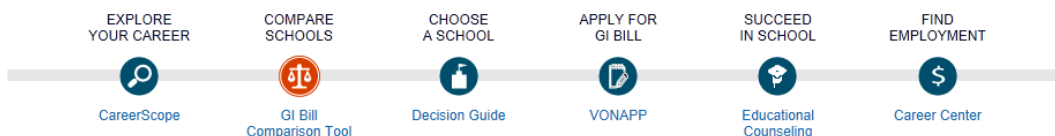
The GI Bill Comparison Tool provides key information about college affordability and brings together information from more than 17 different online sources and three federal agencies, including the number of students receiving VA education benefits at each school.

The GI Bill Comparison Tool is one item in a series of resources the VA is launching in response to President Obama's Executive Order 13607, which directs agencies to implement and promote "Principles of Excellence" for education institutions that interact with veterans, service-members, and their families; and to ensure beneficiaries have the information they need to make educated choices about VA education benefits and approved programs. Recently, the VA also instituted a GI Bill online complaint system, designed to collect feedback from veterans, service-members, and their families who are experiencing problems with educational institutions receiving funding from federal military and veterans educational benefits programs, including benefits programs provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the DoD Military Tuition Assistance Program.

The executive order, signed April 27, 2012, directs federal agencies to provide meaningful cost and quality information on schools, prevent deceptive recruiting practices and provide high-quality academic and student support services. More than 5,000 education institutions have agreed to the Principles of Excellence.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is a comprehensive education benefit created by Congress in 2008. In general, veterans and service-members who have served on active duty for 90 or more days since Sept.

Choosing a School



10, 2001 are eligible. Since 2009, the VA has distributed over \$30 billion in the form of tuition and other education-related payments to more than one million veterans, service-members and their families, and to the universities, colleges and trade schools they attend.

The GI Bill Comparison Tool can be found at: <http://benefits.va.gov/gibill/comparison>

GI Bill® Comparison Tool Beta

Calculate your
benefits and
research
approved
programs.

Eligibility

Cumulative Post 9-11 Active Duty Service: ⓘ
Military Status: ⓘ

School / Employer Information

ⓘ
Taking all online classes? Yes ☐ No ☒

Benefit Estimator

\$	<u>Tuition / Fees:</u>	\$ / year
	<u>Housing Allowance:</u>	\$ / month
	<u>Book Stipend:</u>	\$ / year

SDDVA SPRING MINI CONFERENCES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will host their spring mini-conferences May 6-8, 2014, at the following locations:

May 6—Sturgis—Veterans Club—868 Main Street

May 7—Pierre—American Legion—520 S. Pierre Street

May 8—Brookings—City/County Building—520 3rd Street

As in the past, the training sessions are scheduled to run from 10:00AM to 3:00PM.



OPERATION RAV UPDATE

John Stroud, National Sr. Vice Commander of the VFW, visited the Operation RAV booth at the Capitol this week and commended the Department for their outreach efforts.

SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Bowen has been manning the booth this week and has made some great contacts with veterans and families.

Starting in March, Operation RAV will shift to open house mode and events will be held throughout the year in over 130 communities in South Dakota. In March, make sure to check our website for a listing of the open houses — <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov> — click on upcoming events.



FALLEN HEROES HONORED AT CAPITOL

Guests visiting the State Capitol this week had the opportunity to pay tribute to South Dakota's Fallen Heroes. The OEF/OIF/OND Fallen Heroes Banners were on display on second floor Tuesday and Wednesday.

The schedule for the display can be found on SDDVA's website at: <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/resources/fallen%20heroes%20banners.aspx>.



HEROES AMONG US

Michael Birnbaum was drafted into the US Army in June of 1967. He did his basic training at Ft Leonardwood, MO. He then did his advanced training with the 81mm mortars at Ft Polk, LA.

He was then assigned to the 9th Infantry Division in Bearcat, Vietnam, arriving there on Thanksgiving day 1967. Mike spent eight months at Bearcat. The 9th ID moved to Dong Tam in the Delta and he spent another six months there. He was serving in Bearcat when the 1968 TET offensive began.



Some of his duties while in Vietnam were base camp guard, reactionary force and posting enemy positions on the TOC (tactical operation center) maps.

After Vietnam Mike joined the SD National Guard

and served for 36 years. Mike retired after reaching the position of the 5th State Command Sergeant Major (SCSM). In this job he represented over 3,000 enlisted men and women in the South Dakota National Guard. Serving as the SCSM, Mike was able to visit soldiers in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and many other countries.

Mike's unending service to this country and state continues today as he serves on the South



Dakota Veterans Commission. Mike is a strong advocate for South Dakota's veterans and takes great pride in being able to refer veterans and their families to the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers.

Mike is also very committed to South Dakota's retired veterans and can be found numerous times a year at the State Veterans Home visiting veterans.

Thanks Mike, for your unending service to this state and this country!!!!



HEROES AMONG US

Ron Leighty was born and raised in Aberdeen, SD. He grew up playing baseball and was a member of the Aberdeen Legion Baseball team that won the 1947 State Championship. After graduating high school in 1948 Ron started college at Northern State. At this time he also started to umpire baseball. His love of baseball would take him away from Aberdeen and Northern State to Texas, where he would umpire professional baseball in the Longhorn League in 1950.

When the 1950 baseball season was over, the Air Force came to call on Ron. He enlisted in the Air Force and was in the Air Police. Ron spent three years stationed at Lakenheath Air Force Base in England. His job with the Air Force was very crucial at that point in history as he was a member of the Air Police, and their job was to guard the atomic bombs. At this point in history the atomic bomb was the most devastating weapon in the U.S. arsenal. Ron and his fellow airmen guarded the atomic bombs from the storage facility during assembly and all the way through the delivery of the bomb. Ron's last year in the Air Force was spent stateside in New Mexico guarding bombs as well.

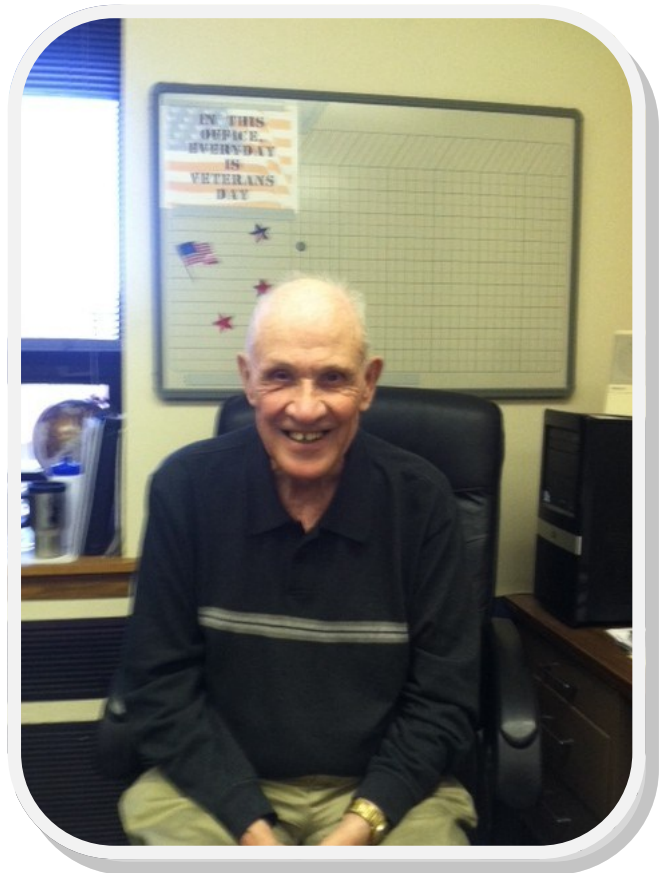
When Ron finished his term in the Air Force he returned to Aberdeen and again enrolled at Northern State. He married his sweetheart, Marlene, in November 1955. While attending college Ron once again umpired baseball. This time it was with the Basin League in and around South Dakota. In 1958 he graduated from Northern State with a degree in business administration and started out on a career. Ron worked a couple of different jobs and then decided to run for the state legislature. In 1963 Ron won election and served in the South Dakota Legislature through 1966. He was a member of the state affairs committee, the judiciary committee, the banking committee, and many others while he served the state of South Dakota. Eventually Ron ended up in Rapid City and served on the Rapid City Planning Commission from 1969 to 1974 and helped in different aspects during the flood of 1972.

In 1974, Ron and his family ended up back in Aberdeen and Ron started a business called "New Trends." He operated this until 1994. Even while running a business, Ron made time to help out where he could.

He was a member of the state athletic commission from 1987 until 1997 and he served as the vice president of Aberdeen Pheasant Baseball from 1997 to 1998.

Ron has always enjoyed serving his community and country. He currently works in the Brown County Veterans Service Office. For the past 16 years, Ron has been working part time in the VSO office. He is a fixture in the office and around the courthouse and although Ron may be past retirement age his spirit and good will towards serving and helping others is as young and vibrant as it was when he was 20 years old!!!!!!

Thanks Ron, for your unending service to this state and this country!!!!



Upcoming Events

2014

Feb. 9—Four Chaplains Service—United Methodist Church—Sturgis—1:30 pm (MST)
Feb. 15—Veterans Benefits Fair—Washington Pavilion—Sioux Falls—1:00 pm
Feb. 15—Valentines for Veterans Concert—Washington Pavilion—Sioux Falls—3:00 pm
Feb 15-16- 152nd Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Sioux Falls
Feb. 18-19—SDDVA New VSO Orientation—Sioux Falls
Mar. 21—Veterans Legal Services Workshop—VA Sioux Falls—4th Floor—9:00 am
Apr. 5-6—152nd Yellow Ribbon
Apr. 7—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am
May 2-4—DAV State Convention—Ramkota Hotel—Aberdeen
May 6—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sturgis - Veterans Club, 868 Main Street—10:00 am (MT)
May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pierre - American Legion, 520 S. Pierre Street—10:00 am (CT)
May 8—SDDVA Mini Conference—Brookings - City/County Building, 520 3rd Street—10:00 am (CT)
Jun 5-8—VFW State Convention—Custer
Jun. 19-22—American Legion State Convention—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
Jul. 7—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am
Aug. 6—DOL Veterans Job Fair—Augustana College Elmen Center—10:00 am—2:00 pm
Aug. 25-29—NACVSO Training Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
Oct. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am

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